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over, a gentleman of wealth and prestige to the Alorese, and he was a 123
Moslem. It was evident that the villagers had an eye for litigation where their women were concerned, and that was a source of trouble it seemed wise to avoid. To Ali I entrusted all the care of establishing a 122
household in an island unfamiliar and remote to us both. This duty he discharged with such skill, tact, and devotion that I have never lived so carefree a domestic existence in areas replete with what pass for civilized conveniences. To Ali was entrusted also the training of five Alorese boys, one from each of the five villages in the valley where I worked. Five boys may seem an excessive staff, but in this way no one of [115]
them had too much unaccustomed work, and each was free to play a normal part in village affairs, and I had the inestimable advantage of an informant and host in each community. Also, as I learned later, the impartial distribution of cash wages stood me in good stead.

The choice of the village in which I was to work involved long ses- 121
sions with the radjah of Alor and several horseback trips into the in- 123
terior. When I chose Atimelang, the radjah was obviously reluctant. He feared and distrusted these savage mountaineers who had been embroiled in the murder of his uncle, the former radjah, some twenty years before. His "kapitan," however, was willing to vouch for my safety, and two hours after the decision was reached, I had purchased the corn crop growing on the land where my house was to be built overlooking the dance place. The floor plan of the kind of house I had designed in terms of local building ability was staked out—a verandah, a living room, two bedrooms, and a store room. To one side was to be the kitchen and bath house. From the hill rising sharply back of the village, water was to be brought in a bamboo "aqueduct" from a spring which was reported to flow all year. I was assured that in two weeks the miracle would be wrought. When the Dutch controleur returned at the end of two weeks with me and the twenty-eight carriers, the house was not completed; it had barely been started. The controleur had to go back but I stayed on in the government rest shack to see the job through. The next two weeks of cajolery improved my Malay and gave me a start at the local language.

This language had not been studied before and, of course, had no 126
written form. It seemed useful to give it some name, so I called it Abui, [101]
which is the word the local people used to designate themselves as opposed to the coastal people. From the beginning vocabularies and texts were taken down phonetically, and by the time that autobiographical material was recorded a year later, I was able to translate directly

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Chapter 2

The Setting

131 ALOR is a small and obscure island in the Netherlands East Indies. It lies directly north of central Timor at the end of that long string of land fragments called the Lesser Sundas. More specifically, it is 8 degrees south of the equator and between 124 degrees and 125 degrees longitude east of Greenwich. This places it about halfway between Java and New Guinea in an east-west line and about halfway between Australia and Celebes in a north-south line.

132 Alor's climate and vegetation reflect its proximity to the Australian land mass. There are prevailing southeast and northwest winds, with severe monsoon storms as the winds change. The wet season begins with a few thunder showers at the end of October, then works up to a crescendo in January, February, and March, when rains fall in a steady downpour each afternoon, sending spates rushing down the deeply
221 gouged river canyons. This is the period of planting and intensive weeding.

[133] With the gradual cessation of the rains the temperature falls slightly, and as the rainy season ends, first corn, then rice and beans are harvested. Later still comes the sweet potato season. By the end of the dry season the whole countryside is brown and parched, and finally many of the springs and small rivers dry up. The only important crop of this period is cassava. At this time natives burn over the land to destroy the weeds they have been cutting in their fields and to drive wild pig for communal hunts. Little survives the annual burning-over except eucas-
137 lyptus trees and a kind of blady grass known throughout the Indies as alang alang.

Alor is therefore not lush jungle country. Rich tropical growth is found only in the ravines where there is moisture the year round and where the land is too steep for cultivation—and to natives, land too steep for cultivation means nothing short of the perpendicular.

133 The terrain is so precipitous that one drops easily into accepting it
184 as an explanation for the remarkable diversity of language and culture on this small island. Alor is only about fifty miles long and thirty wide, but it supports a native population of approximately seventy thousand,
[147] who speak innumerable dialects of at least eight different languages.
101 Abui is the name given the language of the area from which most of the subsequent descriptive data were drawn. It is fifty miles from the

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It is fifty miles from the
101 port of Kalabahi on the western bay to Kolana on the east coast, but by
[illegible] pushing himself a native can walk the distance in some four days. The usual time allowed by officials on horseback is five. It does not seem improbable, therefore, that linguistic variation has been fostered by the difficulty of communication.

101 Culturally too, changes grade from one into the other as one passes
184 from village to village. The only sharp demarcations are between the ten thousand coastal Mohammedans and the pagan mountain peoples of the interior. These two groups hold each other in mutual distrust and
648 fear. At the end of the nineteenth century Chinese merchants began
175 trading on the coast. After the arrival of the first Dutch official in about 1908 coastal men have been designated as radjahs by the Dutch and have been given control over the interior. This control was only gradually extended and was considered by the Hollanders still to be in process, since Malay is not yet widely known in the interior and taxes are still reluctantly paid. Prior to the Hollanders' arrival no such areas of political organization existed; social control centered about kin and village groups. Certainly the coastal people exercised no power over the mountain population, despite brisk trade contacts at stipulated market places.

648 At present the island is divided into four radjahships: Alor proper
631 (including the islands of Pura and Pantar), Kui, Batulolong, and Ko-
177 lana. These political divisions cut across both culture and language. Under each radjah are kapitans who, with the assistance of a handful of field police, administer smaller districts. The principal functions of the radjahs and kapitans are collecting taxes and hearing litigations. A chief called the kepala (Malay for head) has been appointed for these tasks in each village, and groups of friendly villages have been unified under a headman called a tumukun. This hierarchy is a Dutch innovation, but it has been quite heartily accepted by the native population, with whom it functions successfully. The system of litigation, however, has been far more completely accepted than the system of taxation.

648 The government of the Netherlands East Indies is represented by a civil administrator of controleur rank and by a military authority of lieutenant's rank in charge of a garrison of some seventy Indonesian troops. Two or three patrols of fifteen men are constantly on the move through the island, often cutting across the most difficult terrain and always without announcing their route of travel. In addition there is a military doctor, who is responsible for the health of the entire population. He has a hospital in Kalabahi and a small corps of Indonesian assistants with limited training.